

Radial Engineering PowerPre

The Radial Engineering (radialeng.com) PowerPre lists for \$600, streets at \$499 and offers the best metering and feature set of the four preamps tested here. Features include phantom power and polarity flip, plus a Hammond output transformer, -15dB pad, highpass filter (150 Hz), ground lift (rear-mounted) and a two-stage, gentle boost-only EQ called Breath and Punch. The phantom, pad and polarity all carry a confidence LE D.

The 10-segment meter is very good with little light leakage between segments. The three-position Vox setting is very usable across a range of applications. I used both Breath and Punch when recording drums and bass with great effect. Punch gently boosts frequencies between 50 and 100 Hz, while Breath does the same between 5 kHz and 10 kHz. Smart design is evident: The phantom power switch is recessed, a DI input is implemented via the Omniport (provided you're using the Radial Workhorse), there's a front-mounted XLR mic input and the one-stage "Accustate" gain control automatically optimizes signal-to-noise at all levels.

I used the PowerPre for recording vocals, guitar amps and drums with great results. It is especially good in high-transient, high-SPL situations where you can drive the output hard for more transformer color. My APx525 audio analyzer revealed a respectable 87dB SNR ratio. The single-knob Accustate gain control is smooth and linear. The downloadable manual goes deeper into the mechanics of Accustate and is worth a read.

The downsides? The ground lift works with the front XLR only and is a great feature, but the rear-mount makes it a bit impractical. You could also argue that the front-mounted XLR is redundant, but it does offer a quick plug-and-record option for live and desktop situations. These minor gripes are overcome by the fact that this preamp sounds great, offers much character and visual feedback, and costs less than \$500. The PowerPre is an affordable, feature-packed unit that's a must-hear for anyone shopping for 500 Series preamps.



—Kevin Becka



"I was suspect at first, but after a few minutes with the Recoils I realized how much difference they made. Especially on the low end. I'm keeping these. They work."
~ Al Schmitt
 (Barbra Streisand, Steely Dan, Ray Charles, Quincy Jones)



"The Recoils are remarkable! They seem to clear up the low mids, bring out the ultra lows and the transients come alive with greater detail. Very impressive!"
~ Joe Chiccarelli
 (Bon Jovi, Frank Zappa, Tori Amos, Chicago, Poco, Annie Lennox)



"The Recoil Stabilizers are great! A huge difference from regular foam pads. They sound more stationary and connected. I'm quite happy with them."
~ Elliot Scheiner
 (Steely Dan, Fleetwood Mac, Sting, The Eagles, Queen, REM, Faith Hill)



"The Recoil Stabilizers work superbly! I feel like the bottom end is very true and clear and that the mids are right where I expect them to be. They took my monitoring system up a significant notch."
~ Ryan Hewitt
 (Red Hot Chili Peppers, Flogging Molly, Blink 182, Tom Petty, Natalie Merchant)



"Fantastic! The Recoil Stabilizers really tightened up the sound of my near-fields - clearer low-mids and greater spatial definition. They are great... a good, solid product."
~ Mick Glossop
 (Van Morrison, Sinead O'Connor, The Waterboys, Frank Zappa, Revolver)



"With the Recoils I immediately noticed improvements in the low end clarity - to the point that I no longer needed a subwoofer. Incredibly, high frequency detail and image localization also improved."
~ Chuck Ainlay
 (Dire Straits, Vince Gill, Lyle Lovett, Sheryl Crow, Dixie Chicks)

the Recoil Stabilizer™ ...

... a unique reference monitor platform that decouples the speaker and introduces mass to provide a stable, stationary base. The principal is simple - and the results are astonishing as these top recording engineers and producers tell us. But don't just take their word for it... see your local Primacoustic dealer and order a pair for yourself. Hearing is *believing!*




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